The Maharshi

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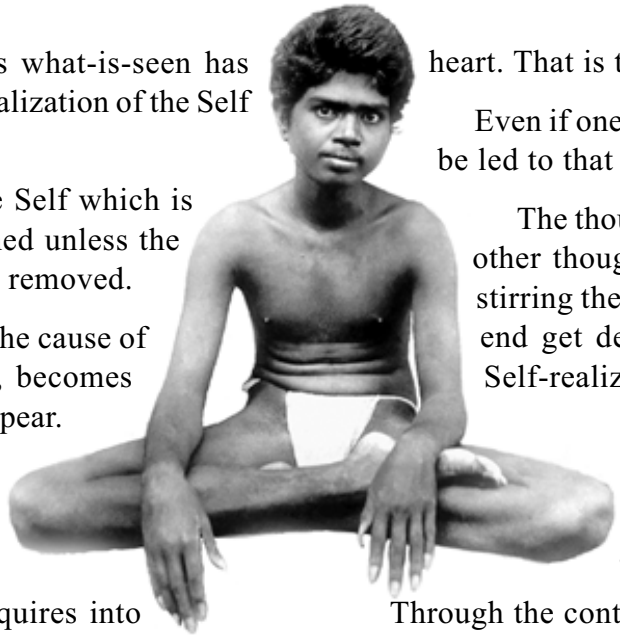
WHO AM I?

ONE-HUNDRED YEARS

A century has passed since M. Sivaprakasam Pillai visited the young Sri Ramana Maharshi on the slopes of the Arunachala Hill and earnestly beseeched the silent sage to answer his burning questions on spiritual fulfillment. The answers he received in writing, signs and gestures constitute the seminal teachings from which the Maharshi never deviated. They are direct, uncompromising instructions meant to guide us to the essential reality of existence, devoid of the ego. Bhagavan was quoted as saying that everything he later wrote or discussed was only a commentary on those answers, which were later published in the form of a book, entitled Nan Yar? (Who Am I?).

And it was this small book that the Maharshi most often recommended to new visitors. All that an earnest aspirant needs to know is contained within this testament on Self-enquiry. Sincere devotees of the Maharshi should constantly reflect on the teachings found in Who Am I?*, and look upon them as the key that opens the door to liberation. A few of the book's salient points are given below.*



When the world which is what-is-seen has been removed, there will be realization of the Self which is the seer.

...so the realization of the Self which is the substrate will not be gained unless the belief that the world is real is removed.

When the mind, which is the cause of all cognition and all actions, becomes quiescent, the world will disappear.

Apart from thoughts, there is no independent entity called the world.

When one persistently inquires into the nature of the mind, the mind will end leaving the Self (as the residue).

That which arises as 'I' in this body is the mind. If one inquires as to where in the body the thought 'I' arises first, one would discover that it rises in the heart. That is the place of the mind's origin.

Even if one thinks constantly 'I - I', one will be led to that place.

The thought 'Who am I?' will destroy all other thoughts and, like the stick used for stirring the burning pyre, it will itself in the end get destroyed. Then, there will arise Self-realization.

When other thoughts arise, one should not pursue them but should inquire 'To whom do they arise?'

Through the control of breath also, the mind will become quiescent; but it will be quiescent only so long as the breath remains controlled...

Like the practice of breath-control, meditation on the forms of God, repetition of mantras, restriction of food, etc., are but aids for rendering the mind quiescent.

When the mind expands in the form of countless thoughts, each thought becomes weak; but as thoughts get resolved the mind becomes one-pointed and strong; for such a mind Self-inquiry will become easy.

Of all the restrictive rules, that relating to the taking of sattvic food in moderate quantities is the best.

One should completely renounce the thought 'I am a sinner' and concentrate keenly on meditation on the Self; then, one would surely succeed.

The mind should not be allowed to wander towards worldly objects and what concerns other people.

All that one gives to others one gives to one's self.

To the extent we behave with humility, to that extent there will result good.

If the mind is rendered quiescent, one may live anywhere.

If one resorts to contemplation of the Self unintermittently, until the Self is gained, that alone would do.

What exists in truth is the Self alone.

He who gives himself up to the Self that is God is the most excellent devotee.

Whatever burdens are thrown on God, He bears them.

As thoughts arise, destroying them utterly without any residue in the very place of their origin is non-attachment.

God and the Guru will only show the way to release; they will not by themselves take the soul to the state of liberation.

Yet, each one should by his own effort pursue the path shown by God or *Guru* and gain release.

The world should be considered like a dream.

In order to quiet the mind one has only to inquire within oneself what one's Self is.

Happiness is the very nature of the Self; happiness and the Self are not different.

There is no happiness in any object of the world. We imagine through our ignorance that we derive happiness from objects.

...when the object desired is obtained or the object disliked is removed, the mind becomes inward-turned and enjoys pure Self-happiness.

In fact, what is called the world is only thought.

Inquiring into the nature of one's self that is in bondage, and realizing one's true nature is liberation.

An Invitation

You, your family and friends are cordially invited to join us in celebrating 123rd Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramana Maharshi in New York City

Saturday 21 December 2002

11:00 a.m.

at the

COMMUNITY CENTER

HINDU TEMPLE SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

(GANESHA TEMPLE)

143-09 HOLLY AVENUE, FLUSHING, QUEENS,

NY 11355

The program will include recitations, bhajans, puja, followed by prasad (lunch).

For more information call:

(718) 575-3215

on the web at: www.arunachala.org/Events

Variety in Bhagavan's Teaching

by Kunju Swami

Sri Bhagavan's detailed explanations of Self-enquiry do not mean that his emphasis on this method was absolute or dogmatic. Sri Kunju Swami relates how the Maharshi gave all methods their due place, citing concrete instances.

Sri Bhagavan's presence and teachings gave hope and strength to different classes of seekers at different levels. Thus the teachings were not limited to those who took to pure enquiry, as is sometimes assumed. Bhagavan, as the *Jnani,* was on a level higher than that of a spiritual master and therefore it followed that whatever one's path one received help and guidance; no attempt at changing one's approach was needed.

An important teaching of his was that intensity of practice and one-pointedness on any path will be fruitful. *Stotra, japa, dhyana* and *vichara* are ascending stages of *sadhana*. While confirming this, Bhagavan was also clear that this did not mean that all stages were necessarily to be gone through by all. Certainly there were exceptions, as for example in the case of the four great Tamil saints who sang the praises of Lord Siva. With them it was an achievement of *akhandakara vritti* (unbroken experience of awareness) brought about by constant remembrance of the Name ("Never was there a moment when I did not think of You!"). In that achievement where was the need for *vichara*? Its result was already there.

Dandapani Swami once pleaded with Sri Bhagavan to give him some *upadesa*. It was a Sivarathri Day. The devotee affirmed he had no practice to his credit. But Bhagavan persistently asked him whether he had not done any little practice of any kind. At last the fact emerged that he used to write the *Rama Koti* (a crore of *Rama Nama*). Sri Bhagavan instructed him to do it more and more.

One doubt that often assails people relates to the relative superiority of mantras. Sri Bhagavan explained that the choice of a particular mantra purely depended upon one's *samskara*. There is no superiority or inferiority in the mantras themselves. In the choice of the mantra, as in other things, it was characteristic of Sri Bhagavan to encourage one in a path already chosen so that it acted like a lever resulting in more progress.

In olden days, when we had the benefit of receiving personal instructions from Sri Bhagavan, one of them was to get into meditation before going to sleep. Thus sleep overtook one as a natural consequence of fatigue and was not induced or preceded by lying down. Also, the first thing in the morning, immediately on getting up from bed, one was to go into meditation. Then the state of mind immediately before sleep would be resumed on waking. This would ensure a serenity of mind and also a feeling of tirelessness throughout the day.

Parayana (recitation), *japa, dhyana* and *vichara* usually represent different modes of *sadhana*. But it may not be possible for a *sadhaka* to be engaged in any one of these continuously. So Sri Bhagavan's advice was to alternately try all the four to ensure continued *sadhana* (which would be otherwise impossible). Thus if one tires of *dhyana* one can do *japa*, following it up with *parayana* and so on. My practice was to recite slokas on my walk to Skandashram in the morning. One day Bhagavan happened to see me and asked what I was doing. When I told him about my *parayana* he encouraged it and said it was a good way to simultaneously go through one's routine and also do something towards controlling the mind.

Sri Bhagavan stressed the importance of developing good tendencies, likening it to sowing a ripe seed. A ripe seed thrown carelessly on rocky soil will sprout and grow, be it even after a thousand years. It will never go to waste. Likewise, good tendencies.

Asked on one occasion how it could be that "Self-knowledge is easy, the easiest thing there is," (referring to Bhagavan's poem "Self-Knowledge") while others said it was the most difficult thing there was, and whether the individual could get it so easily and unaided, Bhagavan seemed to sympathize and pointed out the words, "Grace is needed most," in the same poem. He said that this was the key to understanding the poem.

—The Mountain Path, January 1972

Forty Verses in Praise of Sri Ramana

By Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni
Translated by Dr. Anil K. Sharma
(Continued from the last issue)

The •catvarimþat,Ž daily recited before the Maharshi•s tomb, is a heartfelt outpouring of devotion of the highest order from a disciple to his guru, Sri Ramana. It is hoped that this word-by-word translation will enable devotees to gain a deeper insight into the Divine manifestion of the Maharshi as proclaimed by a unique seer of the 20th Century.

at˜ta-guõa-j l ya naiÿ÷hika-brahmac rine|
namo m y -manuÿy ya gurave t rak raye||12||

at˜ta-having transcended, guõa-property, quality, j l ya - multitude, naiÿ÷hika- highest, perfect, brahmac rine- (to) brahmachari, namo- prostrations, m y manuÿy ya- to the mortal by Maya, gurave -to the guru, t rak raye - to the enemy of Taraka (Skanda)

Prostrations to him who has transcended the multitude of gunas and is the perfect brahmachari! To him who is mortal by the workings of Maya, to the Guru, the enemy of Taraka (Skanda), prostrations!

y n y tra na kekin Õ-kulapati× sn n ya na svarõad˜
p n ya kÿitibh®n-mahendra-duhitur na stanya-
dugdh m®tam|
g n ya pramatheþvar s-savayaso naiv tra-
v˜õ bh®tov saÕ þoõagirau karoÿi bhagavan krauñc dri-
bhetta× kuta×||13||

y n ya - for riding, atra - here, na - not, kekin Õ - of peacocks, kulapati× - leader of the family, sn n ya - for bathing, na- not, svarõad˜ celestial river, p n ya - for drinking, kÿitibh®n- mountain, mahendra great lord, duhitur - daughter, na - not, stanya- mother•s, dugdh m®tam- nectar of milk, g n ya - for singing, pramatheþvar s- the divine attendants of Siva, savayaso- contemporaries, naiv tra - not even here, v˜õ -bh®tov- in a playing, v saÕ-dwelling, home, þoõagirau- upon Arunachala, karoÿi- you do, make, bhagavan- O Bhagavan, krauñc dri-bhetta×- pounder of Krauncha hill *, kuta× - how?

Here there is no king of the peacocks for riding, nor a celestial river for bathing, nor is there the nectar of milk from the breast of the daughter of the Mountain-Lord (Parvati). The divine vina-playing attendents, who are your comtemporaries, are not even here to sing to thee! How is it then, O Bhagavan, pounder of Krauncha Hill, * that you make your dwelling upon Arunachala?

ekaÕ vaktram um ðka-v sa-viraha× p nau na
þakty yudhaÕ martyatvaÕ na pat kin˜ ca p®tan
p rþvadvaye n kin m|
veÿo•laÕ punareÿa mugdha-nayana-pracch dane
bh¨juÿ m antardh nam-upaiÿi t raka-ripo kva
stanyad y data×||14||

ekaÕ - one, vaktraÕ - face, um ðka - Mother•s lap, v sa - seat, viraha× - separated, p nau - in hand, na- not, þakty yudhaÕ- spear weapon, martyatvaÕ - mortal, na - not, pat kin˜ - with flags, ca - and p®tan - army, p rþvadvaye- on either side, n kin m -of the gods (n kin), veÿa× disguise, alaÕ - enough, punar - though, eÿa- this, mugdha - foolish, unwary, nayana - eyes, pracch dane for covering, bh¨juÿ m - delighting in the world, antardh nam - escape notice, pass out of sight, upaiÿi - you go, t raka - Taraka, ripo - enemy, kva - where, stanyad y data× - from your brother (suckled at the same breast)

You have one face, you are separated from Mother Uma•s lap! You do not have a spear in your hand. You are mortal, and there are no flag-bearing armies of the gods on either side! This disguise is enough to cover the eyes of those unwary ones who delight in the world, but how will you, O Enemy of Taraka (Skanda), escape the notice your brother (Ganapati)?

(To be continued)

* A demon took the form of the Krauncha Hill and Lord Subramanya pounded it to pieces.

Reporting From Sri Ramana's Children's Ashrama

(August 17 -23)

by Tara Adiseshan

I would like to write about my favorite moments at the Sri Ramana's Children's Ashrama in Nova Scotia. We did everything from outdoor activities to Self-enquiry. It would be impossible to share everything about the camp with you, so I am going to write about some highlights.

I would like to start with the treasure hunts. On the first treasure hunt we had the girls on one team and the boys on another. Both teams searched for objects on the way to the cabin in the woods. We found two pickaxes, two shovels and two containers of water. These finds led us to the cabin. Everything we found was useful at the cabin. The water is valuable to a thirsty person, the shovels and pick axes were used to plant a tree and make new steps, just like Skandaswamy did at Skandashramam. The treasures included a small picture of Bhagavan and an Arunachala-rock necklace for each of us. We learned that a treasure means something that is valuable to your self.

The second treasure hunt was up in the cave. We hiked up to the cave, sang songs and heard stories about Virupaksha Cave. It felt as though we were in Virupaksha Cave itself. After this, we found the treasures, which were two sand chests filled with precious objects like crystals, polished stones and shells.

On another day, we went to Kejimkujik National Park for a picnic. We went canoeing, swimming and skipped stones in the water. Oslo the dog came along. He was a big favorite of everybody. He dived into the water and he also made Dennis' canoe fall over. The rest of us were canoeing three in a canoe. We had a blast of a time!

We took a trip to Port George beach. We found lots of snails. Saraswati Singh even found a baby snail eating kelp, and we all took turns feeding it. We found four dead crabs and also saw some live ones. Some of us played tic-tac-toe on the mud. We also collected pretty rocks. I would like to go back there again.

Lakshmi Singh

There was one day when we had a class called "Bhagavan and the Kitchen". First we learned a song (Appalam Itta Paru...) and then we started to make foods like salad, rice and baras (vadas). Then the adults were seated and we kids served the adults. After serving the adults, we were quite hungry by then. We were grateful to get food at last! We learned how Bhagavan had cooked with his devotees.

We had a class called "Bhagavan and His Devotees". This time it was about Murugunar - a great devotee of Bhagavan. We painted, listening to the song composed by Murugunar (Para Nalladhu). The adults put on three skits about how devoted Murugunar was to Bhagavan. Not only did we learn from these skits, but we also laughed a lot.

Each day we would start with meditation and pradakshina. In the meditation time, we learned about Self-enquiry and how to meditate. We also learned to detach the mind from the senses. It was not too easy, but at least now we know how to do Self-enquiry.

Oslo was there in the meditation time and for the pradakshina around the temple. Oslo did not attend all the other classes, he would choose which one to go to.

A big part of the camp was music and dance, which some of the adults joined in. My favorite song was "Happiness runs..." and my brother's favorite dance was "The river is flowing...". We learned many new songs and dances, though we also enjoyed singing and dancing the old ones.

On the last night of the camp, we had a campfire. We sang songs and danced around the campfire. We roasted corn in a basket over the fire. Oslo got to eat the husks. After this we were awarded our certificates. Even Oslo got one.

The camp closed with a walk in the woods in the dark. The rule was nobody was allowed to bring flashlights and that we would walk until we heard a wild animal. As we walked in the dark woods, we heard a noise. We don't know if it was from a human or from Oslo. It sure scared most of us and we ran home.

Suddenly the camp ended. It had gone by so fast! Nobody wanted to go home.

This is what I think about the camp: it was fun, plus more fun, and even more fun!

The whole life of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi is a commentary on *saranagati* (surrender). When he left Madurai for good, he took just the train fare to Tiruvannamalai, threw away the packets of sweets given to him by Muthukrishna Bhagavathara's wife and was not anxious for the morrow. He tore off from his dhoti only a strip for a kaupina (loin cloth) and he did not even think of using the remaining cloth as a towel. This is total surrender.

Surrender is a practical proposition. It releases the devotee from life's dilemma. Wherever Sri Krishna teaches about

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